Reality Television

Reality television is a genre of television programming which, it is claimed, presents unscripted dramatic or humorous situations, documents actual events, and features ordinary people rather than professional actors. It could be described as a form of artificial or "heightened" documentary. Although the genre has existed in some form or another since the early years of television, the current explosion of popularity dates from around 2000.

Reality television covers a wide range of television programming formats, from game or quiz shows which resemble the frantic, often demeaning programmes produced in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s (a modern example is Gaki no tsukai), to surveillance- or voyeurism-focused productions such as Big Brother.

Critics say that the term "reality television" is somewhat of a misnomer and that such shows frequently portray a modified and highly influenced form of reality, with participants put in exotic locations or abnormal situations, sometimes coached to act in certain ways by off-screen handlers, and with events on screen manipulated through editing and other post-production techniques.

Part of reality television's appeal is due to its ability to place ordinary people in extraordinary situations. For example, on the ABC show, The Bachelor, an eligible male dates a dozen women simultaneously, travelling on extraordinary dates to scenic locales. Reality television also has the potential to turn its participants into national celebrities, outwardly in talent and performance programs such as Pop Idol, though frequently Survivor and Big Brother participants also reach some degree of celebrity.

Some commentators have said that the name "reality television" is an inaccurate description for several styles of program included in the genre. In competition-based programs such as Big Brother and Survivor, and other special-living-environment shows like The Real World, the producers design the format of the show and control the day-to-day activities and the environment, creating a completely fabricated world in which the competition plays out. Producers specifically select the participants, and use carefully designed scenarios, challenges, events, and settings to encourage particular behaviours and conflicts. Mark Burnett, creator of Survivor and other reality shows, has agreed with this assessment, and avoids the word "reality" to describe his shows; he has said, "I tell good stories. It really is not reality TV. It really is unscripted drama."

Questions

Q1 - In the first line, the writer says 'it is claimed' because

☐ they agree with the statement.
☐ everyone agrees with the statement.
☐ no one agrees with the statement.
☐ they want to distance themselves from the statement.
Q2 - Reality television has
☐ always been this popular.
☐ has been popular since well before 2000.
☐ has only been popular since 2000.
☐ has been popular since approximately 2000.

Q3 - Japan
☐ is the only place to produce demeaning TV shows.
☐ has produced demeaning TV shows copied elsewhere.
☐ produced Big Brother.
☐ invented surveillance focused productions.

Q4 - People have criticised reality television because
☐ it is demeaning.
☐ it uses exotic locations.
☐ the name is inaccurate.
☐ it shows reality.

Q5 - Reality TV appeals to some because
☐ it shows eligible males dating women.
☐ it uses exotic locations.
☐ it shows average people in exceptional circumstances.
☐ it can turn ordinary people into celebrities.

Q6 - Pop Idol
☐ turns all its participants into celebrities.
☐ is more likely to turn its participants into celebrities than Big Brother.
☐ is less likely to turn its participants into celebrities than Big Brother.
☐ is a dating show.

Q7 - The term 'reality television' is inaccurate
☐ for all programs.
☐ just for Big Brother and Survivor.
☐ for talent and performance programs.
☐ for special-living-environment programs.

Q8 - Producers choose the participants
☐ on the ground of talent.
☐ only for special-living-environment shows.
☐ to create conflict among other things.
☐ to make a fabricated world.
Q9 - Paul Burnett

☐ was a participant on Survivor.
☐ is a critic of reality TV.
☐ thinks the term 'reality television' is inaccurate.
☐ writes the script for Survivor.

Q10 - Shows like Survivor

☐ are definitely reality TV.
☐ are scripted.
☐ have good narratives.
☐ are theatre.

Guessing Meaning from the Context

Match the bold words in the text with their meanings.

1. _____ unscripted     a. an incorrect or unsuitable name
2. _____ covers         b. attraction
3. _____ frantic        c. changed
4. _____ demeaning       d. not written
5. _____ misnomer       e. not correct
6. _____ modified       f. humiliating, degrading
7. _____ abnormal       g. to discuss thoroughly
8. _____ coached        h. made up, fake
9. _____ appeal         i. serious disagreement
10. _____ eligible       j. mad, furious, violent
11. _____ inaccurate     k. to instruct
12. _____ fabricated    l. odd, strange
13. _____ conflicts     m. suitable, worthy of being chosen
Which is the hardest language?

People often ask which is the most difficult language to learn, and it is not easy to answer because there are many factors to take into consideration. Firstly, in a first language the differences are unimportant as people learn their mother tongue naturally, so the question of how hard a language is to learn is only relevant when learning a second language.

A native speaker of Spanish, for example, will find Portuguese much easier to learn than a native speaker of Chinese, for example, because Portuguese is very similar to Spanish, while Chinese is very different, so first language can affect learning a second language. The greater the differences between the second language and our first, the harder it will be for most people to learn. Many people answer that Chinese is the hardest language to learn, possibly influenced by the thought of learning the Chinese writing system, and the pronunciation of Chinese does appear to be very difficult for many foreign learners. However, for Japanese speakers, who already use Chinese characters in their own language, learning writing will be less difficult than for speakers of languages using the Roman alphabet.

Some people seem to learn languages readily, while others find it very difficult. Teachers and the circumstances in which the language is learned also play an important role, as well as each learner's motivation for learning. If people learn a language because they need to use it professionally, they often learn it faster than people studying a language that has no direct use in their day to day life.

Apparently, British diplomats and other embassy staff have found that the second hardest language is Japanese, which will probably come as no surprise to many, but the language that they have found to be the most problematic is Hungarian, which has 35 cases (forms of nouns according to whether it is subject, object, genitive, etc.). This does not mean that Hungarian is the hardest language to learn for everyone, but it causes British diplomatic personnel, who are generally used to learning languages, the most difficulty. However, Tabassaran, a Caucasian language has 48 cases, so it might cause more difficulty if British diplomats had to learn it.

Different cultures and individuals from those cultures will find different languages more difficult. In the case of Hungarian for British learners, it is not a question of the writing system, which uses a similar alphabet, but the grammatical complexity, though native speakers of related languages may find it easier, while struggling with languages that the British find relatively easy.

No language is easy to learn well, though languages which are related to our first language are easier. Learning a completely different writing system is a huge challenge, but that does not necessarily make a language more difficult than another. In the end, it is impossible to say that there is one language that is the most difficult language in the world.
Questions

Q1 - The question of how hard a language is to learn is relevant to both first and second language acquisition.
   ☐ True ☐ False

Q2 - Portuguese is definitely easier than Chinese.
   ☐ True ☐ False

Q3 - A Japanese speaker may well find the Chinese writing system easier than a speaker of a European language.
   ☐ True ☐ False

Q4 - The Hungarian alphabet causes problems for British speakers.
   ☐ True ☐ False

Q5 - Hungarian is the hardest language in the world.
   ☐ True ☐ False

Q6 - Hungarian has as many cases as Tabassaran.
   ☐ True ☐ False

Q7 - Many British diplomats learn Tabassaran.
   ☐ True ☐ False

Q8 - The writer thinks that learning new writing systems is easy.
   ☐ True ☐ False

Referring Expressions

Find what the following words refer to.

1. it (line 1)_________________  11. that (line 32) ____________
2. their (line 3) _______________  12. it (line 33) _______________
3. their (line 12) _______________
4. it (line 14) _________________
5. it (line 17) _________________
6. they (line 21) _______________
7. this (line 22) ________________
8. it (line 23) _________________
9. it (line 25) _________________
10. it (line 29) _________________
ANSWER KEY

REALITY TELEVISION

Comprehension Questions
1. D  5. C
2. D  6. B
3. B  7. D
4. C  8. C

Guessing Meaning from the Context
1. d  8. k
2. g  9. b
3. j  10. m
4. f  11. e
5. a  12. h
6. c  13. i
7. l

WHICH IS THE HARDEST LANGUAGE?

True/ False Questions

Referring Expressions
1. it (line 1) to answer
2. their (line 3) people’s
3. their (line 12) Japanese speakers’
4. it (line 14) to learn languages readily
5. it (line 17) language
6. they (line 21) British diplomats and other embassy staff

7. this (line 22) having 35 cases in Hungarian language

8. it (line 23) Hungarian language

9. it (line 25) Caucasian

10. it (line 29) grammatical complexity

11. that (line 32) learning a completely different writing system is a huge challenge

12. it (line 33) to say that there is one language that is the most difficult language in the world